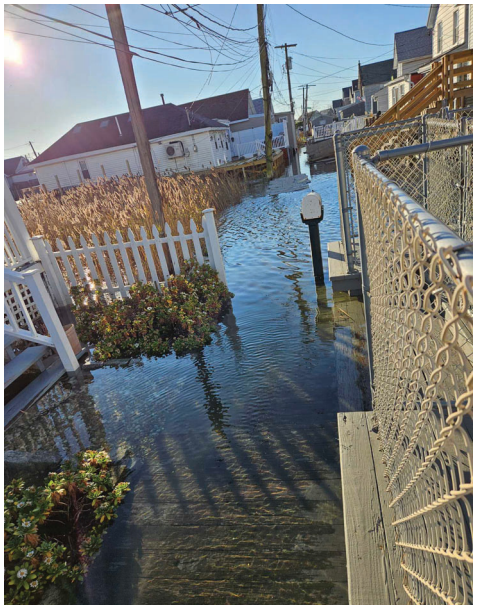
MyCoast NY: Engaging Communities to Document Floods and Storm Damage

NYSG coordinates a statewide community science program enabling the public to document and share their experiences with floods, storm damage, and coastal change through photos.

As increases in precipitation, storm frequency and intensity, and sea level rise are accelerating, New York communities are faced with the challenge of documenting and communicating increasing flood risk with limited resources.



Coastal flooding due to high tide, Jamaica Bay, November 16, 2024. Photo: Joanne Furstman via MyCoastNY.

MyCoast NY is a portal used by New Yorkers since July 2022 to collect and analyze photos of flooding, changing shorelines, and hazardous weather impacts. New York Sea Grant (NYSG) in partnership with the New York State Water Resources Institute works with partners across the state to promote its use.

MyCoast NY has captured photos of coastal and inland flooding in 26 counties across the state. In 2024, the MyCoast NY tool was integrated into the curriculum of a NYSG pilot program, the Jamaica Bay Community Flood Fellowship. Fellows and community members learned how to use MyCoast NY to record and analyze qualitative data about flooding. Additionally, NYSG integrated MyCoast NY photos into a new series of Neighborhood Flood Reports that draw on qualitative and quantitative data to create neighborhood-level portraits of flooding in New York City. In the Hudson Valley, MyCoast NY has been used to raise awareness of coastal flooding in low-lying areas along the Hudson River Estuary impacted by sea level rise.

"Photographs can show flooded areas that might be outside of mapped floodplains, or in otherwise surprising locations. It's especially important to document these locations, as they will likely be more at risk with more extreme weather due to climate change, and often are located in lower income or disadvantaged neighborhoods. As someone who is working on flooding regionally in the Hudson Valley, MyCoast also helps me better understand impacts across a large geographic area."
— Emily Vail, Executive Director, Hudson Valley Watershed Alliance

Since inception, 867 New Yorkers have registered for MyCoast NY, and 1376 photos have been received from Flood Watch and Storm Reporter portals from 26 counties, documenting coastal and inland flooding. MyCoast NY assists the emergency management community with event monitoring and forecast improvement, and is used by local and regional organizations to understand impacts and better communicate with community members. Learn more at https://mycoast.org/ny.

Project Partner/Funder:

- Funding: New York State Water Resources Institute at Cornell University

Sea Grant NEW YORK

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

New York State has 3,400 miles of diverse coastline and is the only state in the U.S. bordering both the Great Lakes and Atlantic Ocean. More than 85% of NY's population lives in a coastal region.

NYSG offices

New York Sea Grant regional offices provide innovative research, technical assistance, and outreach on such issues as water quality, coastal resilience, marine & freshwater fisheries, invasive species, algal blooms, aquaculture & seafood, coastal literacy, and shoreline community development.

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NYSG Focus Area for this project summary:

Resilient New York Communities & Economies

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